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ABSTRACT

One of the most important implications for professional adult educators drawn from this review of the literature (emphasizing seven research studies which focus on the individual learner) stems from the increasing evidence that adults plan a great deal of learning for themselves without any assistance or intervention from professional adult educators. The studies indicate that an adult's learning project is a specific, personal, and individualized effort. The need of reliable subject matter resources for self-planned learning projects challenges the adult educator to increase the diversification in "packaging" subject matter (e.g., tapes, cassettes, single topic newsletters, television) for individual learning projects. Learners perceived, probably accurately, that group learning did not fulfill personal goals. Current education models must change; new techniques for building learner goals into group learning activities must be explored. People engaged in self-planned learning need and want help with their learning. How will coordinating mechanisms be formed to provide the necessary counseling, resources and referrals? Future studies must focus on the major areas and issues of self-planned learning. (Author/AJ)

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SELF-PLANNED LEARNING:
IMPLICATIONS FOR THE FUTURE OF ADULT EDUCATION

by

Patricia M. Coolican

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Introduction

Adult education has a large body of research findings about participation. Most of these studies, however, are studies of adults who participate in institutional programs. Adult educators really know very little about participation in adult learning activities from the individual learner's standpoint--how much time he spends at learning, what and why he learns, how he learns, where he learns, and what help he obtains to assist him in his learning. Nor is very much known about the adult education delivery system and its inadequacies.

It is only recently that participation studies have focused on the individual who is engaged in learning. Data from these studies have resulted in observations and implications which are by no means trivial. One revealing part of these studies was the fact that almost 70 percent of the learning activities undertaken were self-planned outside the institutional framework of adult education. The high incidence of self-planned learning raises serious policy questions concerning the future of adult education.

Findings from studies with an institutional focus

Participation studies with an institutional focus have most often taken the form described as "clientele analysis." This type of study consists of a description of the characteristics of the participants in adult education programs of one or more agencies in comparison with the characteristics of the general population who could potentially be served. The characteristics frequently used for comparison include sex, age, employment status, level of occupation, level of income, marital status, family status, and place of residence.

Numerous studies of this kind have been conducted throughout the country, and out of them has emerged a fairly consistent profile describing the parti-

cipant in adult education programs. Houle summarized clientele analysis studies with these general conclusions:

> In general, high income groups are more likely to take part in educational activities than low income groups. Participation is also positively related to the size of the community, the length of residence in it, and the number of different kinds of educational activity available. People with certain nationality or religious backgrounds are more active than those with other backgrounds. Age is important; the very young adult seldom takes part, but there is a sharp upturn in the late twenties, a fairly constant level of activity until the age of fifty, and a decline afterward. Married people participate more than single people, and families with schoolage children more than families without them. Many more professional, managerial, and technical people take part relative to their number in the population than do people from other occupational groups; next in significance are white collar and clerical workers; then skilled laborers; and lastly unskilled laborers. But the most universally important factor is schooling. The higher the formal education of the adult, the more likely it is that he will take part in continuing education. The amount of schooling is, in fact, so significant that it underlies or reinforces many of the other determinants, such as occupation, size of community, length of stay in it, and nationality and religious background.[1]

One outcome of clientele analyses has been generalizations concerning the participation patterns of various subgroups within the population, and an accompanying tendency to expect all members of a particular subgroup to exhibit similar patterns of behavior. Thus persons with a low level of education are usually thought of as being nonparticipants, while it is assumed that persons with a high level of education generally exhibit high participation rates.

While such generalizations regarding participation patterns undeniably had a basis in fact and might be useful for broad descriptions of the behavior of various groups, they had several limitations. One such drawback was the tendency to lose sight of the differences within groups while focusing major attention on the differences among groups. Within the less educated group there were people who did participate; similarly, among the better educated there existed people who did not participate. As indicated, these people

tend to be ignored in discussions of participation.

The clientele analyses studies had another limitation in that they dealt with single actions of individuals, not with their whole patterns of learning effort. Also, since every adult education institution was developed in terms of more or less explicit conditions that limited its clientele, participation studies from the institution point of view were not much more than countings of those who participated in the programs.

Brunner[2] cited the need for research that took as its starting point not the act of participation but the participant. Houle further challenged adult educators by stating that the theory and practice of adult education would not progress very far until they were based on an understanding of how mature people approach the tasks and opportunities of adulthood.[3]

Findings from studies which focused on the individual learner

Houle[4] is credited with having done the first study that focused on the individual's whole pattern of educational effort. His basic thesis was that the desire to learn, like every other human characteristic, is not shared equally by everyone. This thesis was upheld in his findings. From his results, Houle proposed a theoretical typology defining three major ideal types of participants in continuing education according to their learning orientations. Cautioning that these were not pure types, Houle classified continual learners as (1) goal-oriented: those who use education as a means of accomplishing clear-cut objectives; (2) activity-oriented: those who utilize adult education as a means of satisfying social needs; (3) learning-oriented: those who seek knowledge for its sake.

Sheffield, Ingham, and Litchfield,[5] using different techniques of measurement, attempted to devise a meaningful scale on which the total educative activity of given individuals could be measured. Each investigator

derived a total score of educational participation for each person studied. The scores were based on an individual's self-reporting of his actual performance in activities judged to be undertaken for purposes of education. Litchfield concluded that:

> There no longer appears to be any validity in the belief, long held by many adult educators, that there are participants and non-participants in adult education. All men and women partake of adult education to some extent. The focus now must be upon questions of the degree and kind of that participation.[6]

One of the most comprehensive studies focusing on the educational pursuits of American adults was a national survey[7] conducted by the National Opinion Research Center. Among other things, this study found the phenomenon of self-teaching was quite common among adults--this type of activity had never before been extracted from a national sample of the population. An estimated nine million adults in the United States carried on at least one self-instruction project during the year preceding the interview. The authors stated that the incidence of self-instruction among adults was "surprising" and "much greater than anticipated." They suggested that "the category may well represent the most overlooked avenue of activity in the whole field."[8]

Johnstone and Rivera did not specifically define the concept independent study--it was referred to as "trying to teach yourself something on your own."[9] They also used independent study interchangeably with self-education and self-instruction.

The Johnstone and Rivera study estimated that approximately one person in five had been active in some form of learning during the twelve-month period just prior to June, 1962. Of all adults who reported at least one educational activity during the year, approximately 8 percent had engaged in independent study.[10] When people were asked whether or not they had ever engaged in independent study since leaving school, 38 percent recalled at least one occasion on which they had tried to teach themselves something on

their own.[11] This represented a substantial number of adults who had engaged in learning something on their own after leaving school.

Certain types of subject matter were frequently self-taught whereas others were not. When all the self-taught subjects reported by the interviewees were classified, the category most frequently self-taught concerned the area of home and family. Fifty-nine percent of the learning efforts in this area were self-taught rather than learned by some other method. Forty-three percent of the courses and projects in hobbies and recreation were self-taught, as were 40 percent in general education, 30 percent in personal development, 25 percent in vocational subjects, 23 percent in public affairs, and 13 percent in religion.[12] A more detailed analysis of 49 types of subject matter found that at least 80 percent of all courses in technical arts and hobbies, gardening, and home improvement skills were self-taught.[13]

The incidence of independent study might well have been greater than was reported in the Johnstone and Rivera study. It is important to note that while <u>all</u> courses that involved instruction were recorded in the interview, the inventory only had space to record two subjects for independent study, although undoubtedly some people studied more than this on their own.

The interview question on which independent study statistics were based was worded thusly:

> Up to this point, we've been talking about enrollment in courses and attendance at classes. During the past twelve months, have you tried to teach yourself some new subject matter or skill by means of independent study on your own?[14]

The interviewer merely accepted and recorded a response of "yes" or "no." No attempt was made to apply, or explain to the interviewee, any criteria for deciding whether a particular example of learning should or should not be included. Interviewers merely asked one general question--they did not explain the question, encourage the respondent to consider various possible examples of his self-teaching, nor probe into the meaning of his responses.

No additional information was collected concerning the learning materials and methods employed in self-teaching. Thus, many gaps still remained to be filled by other researchers.

Beginning with Allen Tough's work in 1965, a systematic inquiry of the self-learner began to emerge. Tough has probably pursued the study of self-planned learning more than any other single adult educator. He defines self-planned learning as a person's deliberate attempt to learn some specific knowledge and/or skill where he himself assumes primary responsibility for planning not only the why, but also the what and how to learn, when to learn, and where to learn. He may include a course as part of the total learning effort or seek materials or advice from an educational institution, but he retains the control of and responsibility for deciding what resources and activities to use each time.[15]

Tough's doctoral research[16] focused on the behavior of adults while planning their own learning projects. Tough found that an adult can indeed perform the teaching tasks for himself and that he seeks help from a variety of sources while undertaking self-planned learning. A further study of the major reasons for beginning and continuing a learning project[17] has provided greater insight into an adult's conscious motivation at the time he begins a deliberate sustained effort to learn, and at the midpoint of the learning project.

Tough's most recent study[18] investigated the learning activities of a small group of adults. Intensive, probing interviews revealed that these adults spent an average of 700 to 800 hours in deliberate learning projects per year. Approximately two-thirds of this learning was self-planned.

None of the earlier studies uncovered as much self-planned learning as was found in the Tough study. Basically, these earlier studies uncovered only the learning efforts that the person could recall fairly quickly and

easily. It was undoubtedly easier to recall a course or conference or discussion group than it was to recall most self-planned learning efforts. For this reason, many self-planned projects probably remained undetected in previous studies. The interview schedule Tough designed called for a probing interview with the learner. In his interviews, he used long lists of subject matter and learning methods to stimulate recall. Instead of asking only one general question, he tried several different ways of asking the person to recall additional projects. A two-hour interview was devoted exclusively to discovering all the person's learning projects during the preceding year, and to gathering certain basic data about these projects. Despite his intensive efforts, Tough reported that "interviewers felt they failed to uncover all of the learning projects in some interviews and that perhaps self-planned learning is even more common than our figures indicate."[19]

Findings from Tough's study suggested that a large segment of our population does not use the traditional approaches to learning. The samples used by Tough were very small, however, and not all of them were chosen on a completely random basis from a large population. Despite the inadequacies of the samples, the data were encouraging enough to indicate that further research on self-planned learning could be valuable.

Since Tough's exploratory study in 1970, seven studies which utilized Tough's design have been completed and one exploring the learning projects of elderly adults is underway in Nebraska.[20] Six of the seven completed studies covered a period of twelve months prior to the interview and described learning efforts in all aspects of the respondents' lives. Fair[21] concentrated on the learning efforts of first year elementary teachers. Since his study included only the learning efforts of teachers in their roles as beginning professionals and covered a period of six months prior to the interview, data are not included in the summary of studies.

The Tough study included sixty-six adults from seven populations--blue-collar factory workers, women and men in jobs at the lower end of the white-

collar scale, beginning elementary school teachers, municipal politicians, social science professors, and upper-middle-class women with preschool children. McCatty[22] studied a random sample of fifty-four professional men in a suburb of Toronto, Canada. Johns[23] studied the learning activities of a random sample of thirty-nine practicing pharmacists in the Atlanta, Georgia metropolitan area. Denys[24] has investigated the learning projects of forty African professionals (senior managers and teachers). Johnson[25] studied the learning projects pursued by a stratified random sample of forty adults who had earned an adult high school diploma or a high school equivalency certificate during 1970-71 in Fort Lauderdale, Florida. Coolican[26] investigated the learning projects of forty-eight Syracuse, New York mothers whose oldest child was not yet in school.

The University of Tennessee,[27] under contract from the Tennessee Valley Authority, investigated the learning activities of a random sample of 443 adults in both a rural and an urban county of East Tennessee. This study was not only the largest one undertaken to date but also the only one that used a random sample from the general population. The design of this study differed from the others--interviewees were asked to recall all learning projects undertaken during the twelve months prior to the interview, but data were collected for only one of the learning projects reported. This limitation of comparable data is a setback because this was the first study utilizing Tough's design that had not only a random sample from the general population but also a sample large enough to statistically measure the extent of association between personal characteristics of the learner and the extent of learning activity undertaken.

Major Findings From Research Studies Which Focus on the Individual Learner

A summary of the major findings from seven studies is presented in Table 1. Each study utilized Tough's design and described learning efforts in all aspects of the respondents' lives in the twelve months prior to the interview.

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TABLE 1.--A COMPARISON OF SUMMARY STATISTICS FROM SEVEN RESEARCH STUDIES

	Tough (7 populations) (N=66)	Tennessee (general pop.) (N=443)	Coolican[a] (mothers) (N=46)	Johnson (adult H.S. & GED grads.) (N=40)	Johns (pharmacists) (N=39)	McCatty (prof. men) (N=54)	Denys (African professionals) (N=40)
Number learning projects conducted during last 12 mos.							
Mean	8.3	3.9[d]	4.4	14.4[d]	8.4	11.1	4.8
Median	8	3.4[d]	4.4	13.0[d]	8.8	10.3	4.8
Range	0-20	0-19	1-9	6-29	1-22	2-31	1-12
Percent of participation	98%	96%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
Total estimated time spent in hours							
Mean	816		244	877[d]	1046	1244	430
Median	687		160	771[d]	558[c]	1058	376
Range	0-2509		24-1012	330-2405	31-6165	157-4233	20-1324
Length of learning projects in hours							
By individual: Mean	104		53	68[d]	151[cd]	123	92
Median	81		35	56[d]	92[cd]	103	89
Range	13-464		9-172	27-342[d]	8-846[cd]	25-529	10-189
By project: Mean			58	61	124	112	90
Median			35			49	50
Range			7-492		7-3000[c]	7-1646	7-540
Current status of projects							
Active	66%		73%	52%	75%		
Completed	34%[b]		20%	25%	16%		
Inactive			7%	23%[b]	9%		
Dropped			0%				

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TABLE 1.--Continued

	Tough	Tennessee	Coolican	Johnson	Johns	McCatty	Denys
Learning for credit							
Credit	1%		2%	23%	5%	1%	7%
Noncredit	99%		98%	77%	95%	99%	93%
Planner type							
Self-planned	68%		67%	60%	56%	76%	75%
Group-planned	12%		16%	23%	16%	11%	11%
One-to-one	8%		11%	14%	9%	7%	6%
Resource-planned	3%		5%	3%	19%	1%	4%
Mixed	9%		...	...	...	5%	3%
Subject matter areas studied							
Vocational			7%	11%	30%	55%	39%
Personal development			11%	...	9%	5%	13%
Home and family			46%	23%	14%	9%	9%
Public affairs			8%	9%	10%	9%	13%
Hobbies/recreation			18%	[57%[b]	26%	15%	6%
Religious			3%		3%	3%	7%
General education			6%		9%	4%	7%
Farming			...	...	...	...	6%
Major method of learning by order of use				Practice Reading Discussion Listening Observation Viewing Other	Practice Reading Discussion Listening TV and Radio Observation Instruction Other	Reading Discussion Practice Observation TV and Radio Other	Reading Listening Practice Searching Discussion Observation

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TABLE 1.--Continued

	Tough	Tennessee	Coolican	Johnson	Johns	McCatty	Denys
Primary subject matter resource for all projects			21% Intimate 15% Paid expert 16% Books 11% Group or instructor 6% Magazines 3% Programmed materials 5% Newspaper 5% Television 3% Self-formed groups 2% Intimate expert 3% Observation and experience 1% Exhibits 8% Mixed				

Note: Sections where no data are reported indicate that data were unavailable

[a]This study set a minimum of one hour for a learning project to qualify--Tough and all other studies set a minimum of seven hours. This data exclude learning projects of less than seven hours.

[b]Investigator combined categories indicated.

[c]Data supplied by investigator through correspondence.

[d]Data computed by author.

Comparisons must nonetheless be cautious and tentative at this stage. The studies varied in their populations and methods of sample selection. The only study which was a survey of the general adult population has limited data. No coefficients of interviewer reliability were established among the various interviewers engaged in the seven studies. With these limitations in mind, the following tentative conclusions are set forth regarding the learning activities of adults.

Extent of learning activity undertaken in the past year

In measuring the extent of learning participation, two dimensions were considered--the number of learning projects undertaken and the estimated number of hours spent. Tough found that his subjects organized their learning efforts around learning projects--defined as a series of related episodes, adding up to at least seven hours. In each episode the person's primary intention was to gain knowledge and skill and retain it for at least two days.[28]

Tough reported a participation rate of 98 percent. The other six studies support this finding that although the degree of participation varies, almost every adult undertakes learning activities in any given year. The number of learning projects undertaken by the "typical adult" in a twelve month period ranged from 3 in the Tennessee study of the general population to 13 learning projects for the study sample of adults who had earned a high school diploma or equivalency certificate one year prior to the interview.

Some clear differences exist among populations in the number of hours spent in learning activities. These differences also exist within the same population. The number of hours ranged from 167 for the typical young mother in the Coolican study to 1244 hours spent by the average executive in McCatty's study. Denys was the only researcher who employed a learning activity diary to check the validity of the time estimates elicited in the interview. He reported that diary data yielded evidence that the respondents' time estimates in his study were conservative.[29]

Coolican set the minimum time limit for a learning project at one hour rather than the seven hour limit used in the other studies. Her data indicated a phenomenon of "quick learning"--completed projects which could be learned in less than seven hours and active projects undertaken which would undoubtedly develop into longer projects.[30]

It appears the major question is no longer participation vs. non-participation. Almost everyone undertakes learning projects to some degree. The major focus now should be on questions related to differences in degree of participation, the issue of difference in quality, and how to make this learning better.

Learning for credit

Credit was defined to include both academic credit and certification. Academic credit included those learning efforts receiving credit towards a high school diploma, a certificate from a business school, or a college degree. Certification included learning projects undertaken to pass a test or examination, toward some license or driving test, or toward some requirement or examination related to a job.

Tough's study[31] found that only 0.7 percent of all the learning projects were undertaken for credit. With one exception, data from the other studies were consistent with this evidence that learning for academic credit and certification forms only a small portion of all adult learning. Johnson's study[32] of recent high school graduates reported 23 percent of the learning projects undertaken were for credit. His subjects were involved in more formal schooling than the average adult--community college, full-time vocational programs or job advancement training mandatory for employment or state licensing.

Since certification and credit are considered to be powerful outcomes and motivation of particpation in formal education, the question is what

applicability do certification and credit have for adult education? How should adult education be organized--around institutions, credit, and credentials or around learners?

Major planner

Prior to undertaking a learning project, the learner himself had to decide whether to proceed with the learning project and what (generally) should be learned. Another basic question he faced at the beginning of a learning project was who would be responsible for the detailed planning--what and how he should learn during each episode. Tough adopted the label "planner" to refer to the person or thing that did most of the detailed day-to-day planning in the learning project.

He defined the concept of planner[33] as the person or thing responsible for the majority of the learning episodes of a learning project. The planner was responsible for more than half of the detailed day-to-day planning and deciding in a learning project. The planner made the majority of the decisions about what to learn (the detailed knowledge and skill) in each learning episode, and/or about how to learn (the detailed strategy, activities, and resources). In addition, the planner may have also decided when to begin each learning episode, and the pace at which to proceed. The concept of planner was intended to classify the source of the plans and decisions, not motivation or subject matter.

Tough distinguished four types of planners that were possible from the learner's point of view:

1. Self-planned learning. In some learning efforts the learner himself assumed primary responsibility for planning not only the why, but also the what and how to learn, when to learn, and where to learn. He might seek help and advice about these decisions from a variety of individuals and materials, but he retained the control of and responsibility for deciding what resources and activities to use each time.

2. Group-planned learning. The learner might decide to attend a group and let the group (or its leader or instructor) decide what and how to learn. The group must have a minimum of five persons. Examples included a course, workshop, conference, or informal group of people with common interests.

3. One-to-one learning. In some learning efforts, the planning and deciding of what to learn and in what order was handled by one person, who helped the learner in a one-to-one situation. That is, there was one helper (or instructor, teacher, expert, or friend) and one learner. These two persons interacted, usually face-to-face, although it could be by telephone or correspondence. Even if as many as four learners were receiving individualized attention from one other person at the same time, it was included in this category.

4. Resource-planned learning. In these learning projects, the major part of the detailed directions as to what to learn and what to do at each session resided in some material resource (e.g., a programmed instruction book, a set of tape recordings, or a series of TV programs). The learner followed the programs or materials and they told him what to do next. Tough called this planner type a nonhuman resource. Other researchers have named it object-planned, or inanimate-planned.

In most learning projects, there is clearly a single planner. A few learning projects, however, may not be clearly marked by a major planner. If no one planner was responsible for the majority of decisions, Tough[34] classified the learning project in a residual category called mixed planning.

Tough found that 68 percent of all the learning projects in his 1970 study were self-planned.[35] The other studies reported a high incidence of self-planned learning--ranging from 56 percent in Johns' study of pharmacists to 76 percent of professional men in McCatty's study.

Group-planned projects ranked second in all studies with a range of 11 to 16 percent except for recent high school graduates--23 percent of their learning projects were group-planned. Individually-planned projects accounted for 6 to 14 percent. Those planned by an inanimate resource (programmed learning, tape recordings, or television series) included 1 to 5 percent except for Johns' subjects; he reported that 19 percent of the projects undertaken by pharmacists were resource-planned. The large number of continuing education programs available on cassettes in the Atlanta area may explain why this population had a higher percentage of resource-planned projects.[36]

Traditionally, adult educators have been concerned only with the phase of adult learning that takes place in organized programs in institutions. Self-planned learning seems to be an extensive activity; it may become even more prevalent. It may turn out to be a very efficient way for adults to learn skills and knowledge that are needed. Thus, adult educators can no longer subscribe to the belief that self-planned learning is beyond the range and responsibility of adult education or other institutions. Indeed, the research has pointed out that persons engaged in self-planned learning need and want help with their learning. Inadequate help results in countless wasted hours, inappropriate projects, and inefficient methods.[37]

Subject matter areas studied

Most learning projects were initiated for practical reasons--to acquire knowledge and skill related to one's job, home, family, sport, or hobby. The percentage of projects undertaken in the areas of (1) vocational or occupational competence, and (2) home and family competence appeared to vary with different groups of adults. The percentage of learning projects undertaken in the areas of (1) public affairs, (2) religion, and (3) general liberal education did not vary to any great extent among different groups of adults and each category had a relatively minor position in the overall pattern.

Primary subject matter resource,
Major method of learning

The Coolican study was the only one that asked interviewees to name the primary subject matter resource for each learning project. The two resources named most often were individuals--intimates (friends, neighbors, or relatives) and paid experts. The third resource named most often was books and pamphlets.

In four studies, data were collected on the major method of learning. Denys obtained his data by analyzing the type of learning episodes reported by interviewees. The other three studies asked interviewees what method of learning consumed more time than any other in the learning project--McCatty asked this question for self-planned learning projects only while Johns and Johnson asked it of all projects. Practice, reading, and discussion were the three methods reported most often.

Summary

These studies have added to the growing knowledge of participation research that focuses on the individual learner. They have furthered our knowledge about the concept of self-planned learning. They have also shown that the amount of adult learning effort is extensive and that most of it occurs outside adult education institutions.

The high incidence of self-planned learning raises serious policy questions for adult education such as:

> What are the criteria by which self-planned learning is education and should be called education?
>
> Should self-planned learning be beyond the range and responsibility of adult education or other educational institutions?
>
> What influence should adult educators exert on the learning process carried on by an individual who can plan it himself? Why should they?

If self-planned learning being carried out is effective, what grounds do we have for saying adult education has a role? What should that role be?

Implications for Institutional Policy

Elementary and secondary education

Each study indicated that interviewees had no concept of lifelong learning. Most people queried in these studies believed that adult learning was something that was done in an institutional setting, in a formally-organized course or program. The typical perception of interviewees at the beginning of the interview was that they had not done any learning at all during the past year, and that any learning they had done was unimportant or of low quality. A frequent side effect of the interview was a heightened awareness in the participants of their own learning efforts and of the fact that noninstitutional environments and resources can contribute substantially to a person's continuous learning.

Subjects did plan their learning activities. Coolican[38] reported the deciding and planning phase of the learning project was quickly passed over. Subjects lacked criteria for determining the adequacy, validity, and sufficiency of information. Their evaluation skills seemed simplistic. Subjects seemed to lack knowledge about community resources and how to use them.

Major roles of the formal educational system should be to develop a favorable attitude towards lifelong learning and to produce learners who are competent not only to initiate and direct their own learning but also to help others learn. Involved in the educational curriculum should be learning experiences which provide the learner with skills in goal setting, in planning how to go about learning, in where to get help or advice, and in evaluating.

Adult education

One very practical implication from these studies is the potential use of the Tough instrument as an effective planning tool for analyzing learning needs of adults. Adult educators could gain considerable insight into client needs and learning styles by interviewing representative adults of a target audience as to their learning activities during the past year. This might prove to be a more effective method for determining the educational interests of new and existing audiences than use of planning committees which attempt to involve representatives of the target audience in decision-making processes. The interview technique would provide the adult educator with a picture of the what and why, the how, when, and where--the preferred learning styles.

One of the most important implications for professional adult educators stems from the increasing evidence that adults plan a great deal of learning for themselves. Learners are doing this themselves without any assistance or intervention from professional adult educators. It now seems that adult educators should be concerned about both the learning process and content of the learning from a new viewpoint--that of the self-directed learner. What should be the role of adult educators in assisting adults to increase their awareness of the potential of teaching themselves? It is apparent that one of the primary aims of adult education should be to help adults understand the process of and develop some competencies in self-planned learning. This can be done by assisting adults with acquiring skills in determining educational interests and needs, in selecting and organizing learning experiences, and in evaluating progress.

Research experience from these studies indicate that an adult's learning project is a specific, personal, and individualized effort. This is another reason why the role of institutional adult education, particularly as it relates to noncredit continuing education, should strive to facilitate the self-planned learning efforts of adults. The need of reliable subject matter resources for self-planned learning projects challenges the adult educator

to increase the diversification in "packaging" subject matter (e.g., tapes, cassettes, single topic newsletter series, television) for individual learning projects. These need to be available for use in the home. Individualized instruction within group-learning activities needs to be increased also.

The lack of knowledge that subjects had of adult education institutions reported by Coolican[39] indicates a need for additional program promotion and for improving the referral process among adult education agencies. These important needs could be met through community coordination of adult education programs. Such coordination should include: (1) centralized information service that goes beyond the listing of classes and material resources to include facilitators, tutors, and learners interested in a specific topic, (2) coordinated promotion, (3) coordinated program planning on a community level, and (4) mechanisms to provide for quality control and program evaluation. This calls for a whole new role and self-concept for adult education at the very time they are seeking legitimacy by emulating traditional educational roles.

The effect of the interview on the heightened awareness in the interviewee of his own learning efforts provides a natural counseling technique to uncover learning interests--what he would have liked to learn and what obstacles prevented this.

Group-planned learning activities accounted for only 10 to 20 percent of the total learning efforts of adults. Learners perceived that group learning did not fulfill personal goals; this perception probably was an accurate description of the way it is. Current education models which invite clients to a place where many of his planning functions are performed for him must change. Adult educators cannot continue to believe that they alone know what is best for the prospective learner. The biggest challenge for adult educators is to accept this evidence and to take positive steps to obtain information about specific learners' interests and goals in group-learning

situations. For group-learning programs which extend over a given time period, it is much easier to make sure that group objectives are compatible with individual objectives. It is much more difficult to accomplish this for one-shot programs which involve large numbers of people. Here, it may be important to be clear on objectives and then build the objectives into promotion so prospective audiences can self-select. There is a need to explore new techniques for building learner goals into group-planned learning activities.

Much of the planning for the future carried out by adult education institutions is on a one-year basis. It treats the future in much the same way as the present. Some institutions have been engaged in what is commonly referred to as "long-range program planning"--planning four to five years in the future; however, the future is conceived no differently than the present except for focusing on some economic and demographic variables. There is need for comprehensive planning for the future that attempts to relate non-educational factors in that future to educational policy-making and planning in the present.[40]

Questions about Alternative Policy Goals and Assumptions for Adult Education

These studies demonstrated a high incidence of self-planned learning in the total learning efforts of adults. This poses serious policy questions for adult education. Self-planned learning should not be beyond the range and responsibility of adult education. There should be some kind of intervention. The major policy questions then are what are the grounds for intervention and if the adult educator intervenes in the domain of self-planned learning, what does he influence and how?

Persons engaged in self-planned learning need and want help with their learning. It should be an interest of society to make self-planned learning

more efficient and more effective. It is economically impossible to develop institutional adult education programs for everyone as is done for children. Nor will everyone want to learn in an institutional setting.

Data from these studies show that learning projects undertaken in the area of public affairs played a minor role in relation to the total learning projects undertaken. This raises the question of whether we should be concerned about efficiency and effectivenesss only or about what is or should be learned? What are the grounds for making judgements about what's to be learned and how it is to be learned?

The little time spent in the planning phase of learning projects indicates a need for assistance in developing skills and competencies in planning, in knowledge of resources, and in evaluation. The role of adult educators should be expanded to include not only that of "presenter of subject matter" but also to include that of "facilitator of learning." If that role does broaden, what changes would be required in competencies adult educators need and in the criteria used to evaluate adult education institutions?

If there were to be intervention in self-planned learning, what resources would be available? One possibility could be the formal adult education institutions. The leaders in these institutions need to ask themselves whether they do or should care and why. If they do care, what are they going to do about it? A second potential resource could be other institutions not considered primary adult education institutions but which have an educative role--business and industry, or television are examples of two. A third resource is all those sources not yet operationalized--information networks, or mass communication devices such as cable television or cassettes.

Who will decide how resources should be organized and made available? Is federal support possible for more packaging of timely and relevant subject matter? Is there a way of dividing up subject matter so different institutions have responsibility for specific areas? Who will decide what is the

best way to accomplish this?

How will local communities form the coordinating mechanism needed to provide the necessary counseling, resources, and referrals? Should the federal government establish a new coordinating institution? Should there be federal intervention to provide incentive for institutions to change? What effect would such changes have on current practices, i.e., how would "counting" be used as a means of evaluation to determine future funding in a resource-facilitator program? From these questions it is evident that there is a great deal more analysis which has to be done.

Need for Further Research

These studies have added to the growing knowledge of participation research which focuses on the individual learner. They have developed the concept of self-planned learning. They have also shown that the extent of learning effort is extensive. There is a need for future studies to be directed to additional areas of self-planned learning. These studies should focus on the major questions and issues rather than on questions whether the extent of learning activity reported is a conservative estimate or whether learning projects extend over a two, three, or longer period of years.

Instead of focusing only on the difference in degree of participation between various groups, there also needs to be a major focus on questions related to differences within groups. Why is it that some adults conduct a large number of deliberate learning projects, and spend hundreds of hours doing so? Why is it that others make so little effort to learn? The Coolican study was the first study of adults engaged in self-planned learning which attempted to determine the extent of association between personal and socio-economic characteristics and the measures of learning participation--number of learning projects and total estimated time spent.[41] Further studies are needed using larger samples to test the validity of the tentative conclusions.

A limitation of these studies was preoccupation with quantity of learning activity. They measured the extent of learning effort rather than the extent of changes in knowledge, skill, or attitudes of the learners. A research study which measures behavioral change should be undertaken. The study might be in terms of how much was learned or how important the behavioral changes were to the learner or to others. Comparisons could then be made as to the extent of behavioral change resulting from learning projects which were self-planned, group-planned, individual-planned, or material resource-planned.

Why is it that group learning activities did not play a more important role in the total learning efforts? Why is it that material resource-planned projects played such a minor role? Why is it that the majority of the planners in individually-planned projects were friends, neighbors, or relatives, not professionals? What are the main difficulties these amateur planners encountered in their teaching role? What help would they find most useful in improving their effectiveness? Answers are needed to all of these questions.

These studies have added to the knowledge of self-planned learning. Since it seems to be such an extensive activity, further research is needed on the competencies needed for self-planned learning.

More research is also needed on resources. Why is it that learners rely to such a large degree on intimates (friends, neighbors, relatives) and printed materials as resources? Why is it that some subjects relied consistently on the same resource throughout most of their learning projects? Why is it that adult education institutions are not used as resources to any large extent?

These studies have raised as many questions as they have answered. Contributions have been in specific areas of adult learning conducted by a specific population. At this point in time, there is a need to expand research focusing on the adult learner. Studies need to be undertaken which will

address the major questions and which build upon one another. What resources will be available to facilitate this research? Who will assume the leadership responsibility?

Concluding Note

The growing body of knowledge regarding self-planned learning presents a challenge to the field of education. Educators can no longer subscribe to the dogma that self-planned learning is beyond the range and responsibility of its institutions, in the belief it is an individual activity and affords no opportunity for the adult educator to exert influence on the learning process. Persons engaged in self-planned learning need and want help with their learning.

What are the ways in which adult educators and their institutions can come to understand the challenge of self-directed learners? It will require acceptance of self-planned learning as a viable part of adult education. It will require the assistance of the elementary and secondary school system, more effective planning, and new supportive policies. If adult educators understand the challenge, <u>will</u> they meet it?

FOOTNOTES

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